POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Juanita S. Pilley
Clover Lick, W. Va.
Chapter 6- Religion

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN POCAHONTAS

The Protestant Episcopal church is the oldest church in America having been brought here by the first English colony at Jamestown, but it was not brought into Pocahontas county until around 1866. So far as is known, the first services of the Episcopal Church, were held in Pocahontas county, by the Rev. R. H. Mason, who came from the Warm Springs, Bath county Virginia in 1866. Mr. Mason came three or four times a year for several years, and held services in the home of Dr. John Ligon, Clover Lick, and also in Huntersville. After Mr. Masons removal to Union, West Virginia(1875), his services in Pocahontas were discontinued except for long intervals, and there were no regular services until Bishop Whittle sent Rev. L. J. Hall, a Deacon, in 1877. When Bishop Peterkin took charge of the Diocese in 1778, he found Mr. Hall resident in Lewisburg, and holding services from time to time in Clover Lick and Huntersville. In company with Mr. Hall, Bishop Peterkin paid his first visit to Pocahontas county in October, 1878, holding services at Hillsboro and Huntersville, and at the latter place confirming one person. Since then, visitations have been made regularly and in all fourteen persons confirmed.

The Episcopal visitations made prior to the organization of the Diocese were by Bishop Whittle, September, 1869. August 187., when he confirmed one in Huntersville. In 1874 (Grace Church), Madison Parish, comprising the county of Pocahontas

was received into union with the Council.

In 1880 a plan was inaugerated to build a church at Clover Lick, and through the zealous interest of Mrs. John Ligon it was so carried out that on Sunday August 21, 1892 we were able to consecrate a neat and comfortable building as Emmanuel Church.

The various ministers in Lewisburg held occasional services in Pocahontas county, but the Rev. Dr. Lacy (1881- 1885) was especially active and interested in this work, and more lately Rev. Turner (1898-99) held regular services.

Appointments have been held at Clover Lick, Huntersville, Greenbank, Dunmore, Hillsboro, Edray, Marlinton and Frost.

Within twenty-five miles of the Church at Clover Lick (including the English residents at Mingo) there may be now(1900) residing about twenty communicants. So far we have found great difficulty in organizing this scattered band, and in providing them with any regular service. The completion of the railroad along the Greenbrier River connecting Clover Lick with Elkins on the one hand and Roncevert on the other, will materially lessen these difficulties in the future.

The following gentlemen have acted as vestrymen; Col. James T. Lockridge, Dr. John Ligon, Samuel B. Lowry, James W. Warwick, and Dr. C. P. Bryan.

Rev. Turner took charge of Greenbrier Parish in the fall of 1897, and for some time, preached regularly in Pocahontas county on one Sunday in each month.

In 1901, Rev. Guy H. Crook, residing in Lewisburg, was commissioned by the Bishop to carry on the work in this county and it is hoped that now the railroad has made communication

easier, that more may be done in building up our church. Marlinton is a promising missionary point where we have six or eight members. A site has been selected for a church and occasional services held, but no further progress has been made.

At Clover Lick is the only church building we have in the county. The neighborhood derives additional importance from the establishment of a large lumber plant near the Depot. This will eventually become quite a little town.

Huntersville has sensibly declined in the last few years owing to the removal of the court house to Marlinton.

At Hillsboro, or Academy as it is often called, we have an occasional service. At one time we had four communicants there, but now (1891) only one.

And from a letter of Bishop Peterkin relating his visitation to Pocahontas:

October, 1884

"My annual visit to Pocahontas county was made the last week in August. On Saturday, the 30th, in company with Dr. Lacy I drove from the railroad to Hillsboro, a distance of about forty miles, having services that night. A young man who was traveling through the county in the interest of some Baltimore house, met us at Frankford and tried to dissuade us from venturing further into the interior, but when he come to know something of our former experiences, and especially that I had campaigned through the county in 1861, he concluded that we knew more about it than he did.

On Sunday, August 31st, we had services both in Hillsboro and Huntersville, the distance between them being eighteen miles. In Huntersville we hope soon to have a lot, and then to go on to the erection of a church. On Monday we had services at Clover Lick in Dr. John Ligon's house, eighteen miles from Huntersville and on Tuesday at the school house about three miles higher up the mountain, where I confirmed two. At Clover Lick we have a beautiful lot for a church and we trust the next year to see it built.

That night we pushed on to Hillsboro, on our return, a distance of about twenty-five miles. And the next day, Sept. 3rd, Dr. Lacy having left me to attend a wedding, I drove on thirty-seven miles, to Mr. Churches where I spent the night. Most of our trip thus far described was rendered notable by our most reasonable anxiety in regard to our buggy, which after all the patching our skill could devise for it, still threatened to break utterly down. A judicious exchange on this last day relieved me of further anxiety."

By Sunday September 7th he had reached Hinton.

On two maps in this book it shows that in 1880 the population of the county was 8591 with one clergy in charge and ten communicants, who are supposed to be about one-half the number of baptized persons and about one-third of those who affiliate with the church. With about 15 clergy serving all West Virginia, Pocahontas, Greenbrier and Monroe being served by one clergy. In 1900 the population was 8572 with one clergy and fourteen communicants who were supposed to be about one-half of the number of baptized persons and one-third of those affiliated with the church.

ONE REASON FOR THE SLOW GROWTH OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Those who moved into the county were not Episcopalians, for it is well known that the Germans and Scotch-Irish took possession of it at an early period, and that the Episcopal church did not have an existance, there until a very late period. Those who emigrated from Eastern Virginia were chiefly of that class who had deserted the Episcopal church and had been engaged in a violent hostility to it, and carried it with them, and transmitted to their children, nothing but prejudice against it; which prejudice has been cherished ever since by their religious teachers. But even if such prejudice had not been, so many generations have grown up in utter ignorance of our church that in the great body of the people of Pocahontas there has been no tendency to it, but the reverse. That the services of our church is most admirably adapted to the edification of the poor and laboring man, I firmly believe, and often delight to confirm, but the difficulties in the way of such to make a trial of it are so great, by reason of their partiality to other denominations and various other circumstances, that hitherto all the efforts to induce them to to do so, whether in Virginia or elsewhere, have been of little avail. While it is our duty still to do our part in preaching to the poor, we must not make sanguine calculations of success, or adopt expensive plans, founded on the certainty of such calculation. Had we an abundance of zealous and laborious ministers, and a fund for their support, neither of which we have, or are likely to have for a long time to come, so that we might serve the poor gratuitously, there are doubtless

many places where we might do good to souls, by going among the highways and hedges as the itinerants of the Methodist communion, who are comfortably supported out of a common fund.

page 808

The Diocese of Virginia was divided in 1877 and the new Diocese of West Virginia created.

page 23

All of this material was taken from-

A History and Record

of the

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in West Virginia-by George W. Peterkin, D.D., L.L.